

MAY 20 1980

JUL 28 1980

HISTORIC NAME: Sterling Church

COUNTY: Blue Earth

CURRENT NAME:

CITY/TWP.: Sterling Township

LEGAL DESC.: That part of T105N, R27W, Section 15 described as follows: beginning at the center point of Section 15, thence easterly 300 feet along the south edge of County Road 151, thence southerly 200 feet, thence westerly 300 feet, thence northerly 200 feet to point of beginning.

ADDRESS: County Road 151

CLASSIFICATION:	CONDITION:	SIGNIFICANCE:	THEME/S:
Building <u>X</u>	Excellent _____	Local <u>X</u>	Primary <u>Settlement</u>
Structure _____	Good <u>X</u>	State _____	Secondary <u>Religion</u>
Object _____	Fair _____	National _____	Others _____
District _____	Deteriorated _____		

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: Yes X No _____ Restricted _____

PRESENT USE:

VISIBLE FROM THE ROAD: Yes X No _____

Chapel

OCCUPIED: Yes X No _____

DATE CONSTRUCTED: 1867

ORIGINAL USE: Church

ORIGINAL OWNER: Sterling Congregation

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Unknown

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: Sterling Township
Anthony Nass, Chairman
Rt. 2, Mapleton, Minnesota 56065

ACREAGE: Less than one acre _____
approx. 1.5

LOCAL CONTACT/ORG.: Blue Earth County Historical Society
606 South Broad Street, Mankato, Minnesota 56001

UTM REFERENCE:
Sterling Center Quad. 7.5
15 / 415110 / 4860950

FORM PREPARED BY: Dennis Gimmetad

DATE: January 1980

DESCRIPTION:

The Sterling Church is located in a wooded area immediately adjacent to the Sterling Cemetery in Sterling Township. Surrounding land is used for agricultural purposes.

The one story white frame rectangular structure has a single gable roof pierced by a chimney at the east end. Simple fenestration includes three evenly spaced double-hung 4/4 windows on both the north and south facades and double doors capped by a six-light transom suggesting a Greek Revival influence on the west. The structure lacks further ornamentation.

The interior of the building includes a small entrance room at the west end with two side entrances to the auditorium. Simple wooden pews, thought to be original to the structure, are arranged in a large center and two side sections. A wooden lectern and chair occupies a wooden platform at the east end. Iron wood stoves are located at both the southwest and north-east corners of the building. Wood wainscoting is used on the lower walls; the upper portions are covered with wallpaper. The top of the walls form a curve to join with the ceiling, which has been covered with accoustical tile. No modern utilities have been introduced into the building.

Separating the church and cemetery from the road is an iron fence. An ornamental iron arch bearing the letters "Sterling Cemetery" frames the entrance walk to the church. The property also includes a simple frame privy.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Sterling Church is significant as a surviving rural community structure associated with a center of the initial pre-railroad (1851-late 1860s) settlement of Blue Earth County. Unlike areas further west in the state, the area of the county outside the Winnebago Reservation underwent considerable settlement during this period, owing in part to its accessibility to St. Paul by the navigable portion of the Minnesota River. A major settlement group of the period was the Minnesota Settlement Association, a group of 139 families from New York City who arrived in 1856. Many members of the association were of Scottish descent, an ethnic group which retains visibility in the area today. In 1857, several members of the group and a few other individuals organized a Congregational church, which met initially in a school building. In 1867, they constructed the Sterling Church building on a rural site approximately two miles to the southwest of the townsite of Mapleton, which served the area. After railroad construction occurred in 1870-74 and Mapleton Station was designated and platted, the earlier townsite disappeared; later, in the 1890s, the congregation moved to an urban residence at the

MAY 20 1980

Sterling Church

Blue Earth County
Sterling Township, Minnesota

rail townsite. The church building was preserved by moving it to the nearby Sterling Cemetery, apparently shortly after the turn of the century. The primitive simplicity and integrity of both the unadorned exterior and the sparsely furnished interior are unusual among the area's surviving rural churches, most of which were constructed around the turn of the century and which display more elaborate although modest detailing. The church is maintained by the Sterling Study Club and used annually for Memorial Day services.

Bibliography

Newell, Ronald J. Where the Winding Maple Flows. (Mapleton?): Privately published, 1978(?). pp. 9-13, 82-83.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

for Keeper Melvin Lynn
1/19/89

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

**Note: These changes apply to
Sterling Church in Blue Earth
County, Minnesota.**

REFERENCE NUMBER: 80001958

STATE: MINNESOTA

COUNTY: Blue Earth

RESOURCE NAME (HISTORIC): Sterling Congregational Church

CITY:

VICINITY OF: Amboy

ADDRESS: Co. Rd. 151

CERTIFICATION DATE:

REMOVED DATE:

COMMENTS:

Nina M. Archabal

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State Historic Preservation Officer

JUN 17 1988

Date